

PEACE talks

Where convictions
take center stage

Saturday, **Sept. 19**, 2026 | 7 p.m.

Umble Center

peacetalkscontest.org

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 GOSHEN
COLLEGE

About Peace Talks

Peace Talks is a speech competition for college students highlighting peacebuilding and courageous communication. The first year of Peace Talks is by invitation only to Mennonite colleges and universities that participate in the C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest. In the second year (2027), students at faith-based schools in Indiana will be invited to participate; in the third year (2028), students at any Indiana college or university can apply; and in the fourth year (2029), students from colleges and universities across the nation will be eligible.

Peace Talks builds on, extends and expands the model of the C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical contests. Peace Talks will be a discrete opportunity, not intended to replace the campus contests or the binational C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest managed by Mennonite Central Committee. The winning speakers at Peace Talks may be different from the winners in the MCC binational C. Henry Smith Peace Oratorical Contest.

Live audience note

Please turn off cellphones and put away all devices during this event. We invite you to give silent and full attention to the program this evening, recognizing the significant investment our speakers have made in preparing their presentations. Following the presentations, judges will meet privately to evaluate the five finalists. When the judges have finished their deliberations, the first- and second-place winners will be announced from the Umble stage.

Special thanks

Peace Talks extends its appreciation to the More Than Just Stories team and the communication department for their roles in this contest. Many thanks to Mackenzie Miller for serving as the Peace Talks student assistant. We are also grateful to Goshen College President Rebecca Stoltzfus for this morning's address to the speakers; to Dr. Jamie Pitts and Dr. Gilha Lee of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, for serving as coaches for the speakers; and to Dr. Allan Rudy-Froese for leading a breath and voice workshop.

Welcome and introductions

Anna M. Groff

associate professor of communication and Peace Talks director

Prayer

Dr. Regina Shands Stoltzfus

*professor of peace, justice and conflict studies and co-host of
Just Stories, a podcast of More Than Just Stories*

Speeches

Caoimhe Farrell

a junior communication major at Goshen College
in Goshen, Indiana | *Galway, Ireland*

***"Screens and Society: Building Our Lives Around
Each Other Instead of Technology"***

Sophia Kauffman

a peace and conflict studies and political science major at Conrad
Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario | *Leamington, Ontario*

***"Sitting with Our Shame: Facing the History of
Mennonite Residential Schools"***

Katherine Brown

a senior psychology and Biblical and theological studies major
at Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas | *Liberal, Kansas*

"The Woman on the Corner: Prostitutes are People too"

Preston Vicenzi

a junior studying political science and history and communication arts
at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas | *Newton, Kansas*

***"The Second Crusade: The Iran War's Dangerous
Myth of Redemptive Violence"***

Mateo Gonzalez

a sophomore studying engineering mechatronics
at Hesston College in Hesston, Kansas | *Madrid, Spain*

"More Than a Sentence: Exploring Restorative Justice"

Reception & announcement of winners

Judges

Dr. Anuj Gurung, the Gladdys E. Muir assistant professor of peace studies at Manchester University in North Manchester, Indiana

Dr. Gariot Louima, chief of staff and vice president for equal opportunity and compliance at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana

Dr. Amy Lindeman Allen, associate professor of New Testament at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis

Criteria for Judging

- **Content, message, theme adherence:** Presents a clear, compelling, and well-developed message related to peace, justice, reconciliation, and conflict transformation.
- **Storytelling:** Inspires through the use of stories, narrative, description and imagery.
- **Argumentation, research and evidence:** Persuades through the use of credible sources, examples, stories, statistics and other evidence to support claims.
- **Originality and insight:** Offers fresh perspectives, creative thinking or unique insights rather than relying on clichés or simplistic solutions.
- **Impact and call to action:** Inspires the audience through new awareness, understanding and a call to action.
- **Delivery:** Demonstrates confidence, poise and authenticity.
- **Vocal effectiveness:** Uses appropriate volume, pace, articulation, emotional expression and vocal variety.
- **Audience engagement:** Maintains attention through storytelling, questions, examples, humor, suspense or other techniques.

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Peace Talks is part of More Than Just Stories,
a new media hub made possible through a five-year,
\$5 million faith and storytelling grant from Lilly Endowment, Inc.